
Aspirational Guidelines for Georgia’s Juvenile Court Clerks for Deprivation Case Files

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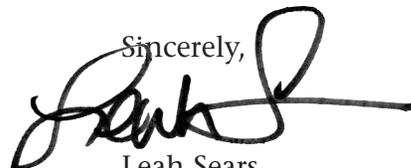


Letter from the Chief Justice

To all Juvenile Court Clerks:

The Juvenile Court Clerks in Georgia who serve our child deprivation cases have tremendous responsibility in child abuse and neglect cases. The case files you keep are crucial to the decisions made by trial and appellate courts and I am well aware of the impact your competence and skill can have on a child's life. It benefits the state to have clear procedures to aid file preparation and to organize record-keeping for children's cases. In consultation with the Child Placement Project and the Court Improvement Initiative, a select group of juvenile court clerks have developed and published "Aspirational Guidelines for Georgia's Juvenile Court Clerks for Child Deprivation Cases."

The authors of this document are to be commended for their efforts to improve the process for our child abuse and neglect cases. It is important that their efforts are honored by striving to meet these guidelines. I personally want to extend my deepest appreciation for the part you play in protecting Georgia's children, and I extend an offer of support to improve the work you do.

Sincerely,

Leah Sears
Chief Justice

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Deprivation Guidelines for Juvenile Court Clerks

Introduction

Nine Juvenile Court Clerks were brought together for a one day workshop on March 11, 2005, to develop guidelines for creating files for child deprivation cases. The workshop and the resulting written product were funded by the Supreme Court of Georgia's Child Placement Project (CPP). The format of this document is designed to be short and concise, yet provide enough details to help a juvenile court clerk create a thorough deprivation case file. While all deprivation cases will contain some of the same elements, these guidelines were primarily developed for cases where the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) has taken a child into custody.

The Need for Guidelines

Children in deprivation cases come before juvenile courts for protection from further harm and for timely decision-making for their future. Juvenile courts are the gatekeepers of our state's foster care system. The issues coming before the courts are complex, requiring many hearings and many people. To perform their extensive oversight role, courts need complete information. It is essential that the case file itself be well organized, easy to read and contain all the relevant information necessary for a judge's decision. An

appealed case depends on a "clean" record which means that everything was done correctly but also that it was thoroughly documented.

The CPP performs annual summer reviews of juvenile courts across the state and has found tremendous variability from county to county in terms of case file organization and maintenance. The result is often confusing, disorganized files that are all too frequently lacking key elements. To that end, the CPP solicited the Georgia Association of Juvenile Court Clerks for assistance in developing guidelines for these particular case files to enhance accuracy and uniformity. A number of juvenile court clerks from across the state volunteered to help achieve this important goal.

When information on diverse practices is shared, the best of each can be incorporated into practice in all jurisdictions. Consistency and excellence in file maintenance for deprivation cases is likely to lead to more consistent results at both the trial and appellate levels, helping to ensure that families involved with juvenile courts across the state will be treated similarly and can hold the same expectations about juvenile court. Meeting these expectations is even more critical today since the number of children in foster care is growing again. On the day of our workshop, over 15,000 children were in foster care.

Mission Statement

To set uniform standards for content and organization of deprivation case files that are opened in response to an allegation by DFCS of child abuse or neglect, from the initial complaint through case closure.

As of 2004, current court files look very different, each bearing the mark of its county of origin. A standardized court filing record would aid in each step taken on behalf of a child through the child welfare system, particularly through a review or appeals process.

Overarching Principles/Suggestions

The organization of court files presents a major problem area. Clerks made the following suggestions:

- Pay attention to the judge's needs.
 - Files should be arranged chronologically, from the initial complaint to the most current.
 - Use out-cards for pulled files.
 - File delinquent and deprivation files together;
 - Use color-coded tabs to distinguish between delinquent and deprivation cases.
 - Flag all court orders.
 - Some courts use both sides of the folder to separate legal vs. social information or vital from non-vital information.
 - Some courts have the advantage of ICON, a digital system that prints an appeals index and corresponding documents.
- A standard cross-referencing system is needed.
 - In counties with more than one juvenile court judge, cases could be color-coded to indicate the primary judge.
 - Files should be arranged alphabetically and to keep siblings collected in one file if at all possible, if not, some sort of cross-referencing to make sure that siblings are linked together for citizen panel review hearings, reviews, etc.
 - There needs to be a uniform rule about incarcerated parents regarding presence at hearings.

File Contents

This document represents consensus of the participating juvenile court clerks as to appropriate content and organization of court files for each step of a child's case through the court system. Appendices follow the summation and contain the current Guidelines for Maintaining a Juvenile Court Docket for the Council of Juvenile Court Judges of Georgia, last revised in April 2001, (*see Appendix A*) as well as sample documents currently in use in specific counties. The latter were deemed exemplary samples of documents worthy of inclusion in any standard court case file. The report concludes with a Wish List compiled by the Clerks of Court to make each child's case proceed more smoothly through the juvenile court system.

Deprivation Guidelines for Juvenile Court Clerks

STEPS IN COURT'S FILE

NOTE: We have attempted to address the steps in a court's file in the most common chronological order. For some elements this was easy such as Step #1 is the "Complaint" because every case will begin with a complaint and likewise Step #17 is "Case Closure" since every case must have a closing memo/form/order. In between, things are more complicated. Cases will end at different stages along the process and thus many cases will not contain all of the elements while others will contain multiple versions of the same element (such as Reviews). It is assumed that if one of the steps occurs in a case, then the Clerk will assure the necessary documents/elements listed below that step will be included in the file and will remain there. When the case is closed by the court, the Clerk will skip to Step #17 and officially close the file.

#1 COMPLAINT

The complaint is the first document filed with the court to initiate a deprivation case. The complaint will generally be filed by DFCS, although complaints may be filed by any person against a child's primary caretaker.

To start a deprivation case, the minimum that must be recorded in the case file:

- An initial complaint alleging deprivation, must be filed prior to all orders. The complaint must come before the shelter care order in the file. A list of approved complaints can be found in the uniform rules. *See Appendix A.*
- An intake memo, usually a DFCS form 453 (the child abuse/neglect intake referral form-*see Appendix B¹*), should give more information than the standard complaint. It usually will contain the following information:
 - ❖ where biological parents are living,

- ❖ a detailed description of the alleged reasons for deprivation *and*
- ❖ a list of all fathers, legal or putative,
- ❖ the child's social security number and date of birth.
- A Contact Sheet attached directly inside the court case file cover containing all names, addresses, phone and fax numbers and email addresses of all attorneys, CASAs or other Lay GALs. *See Appendix C.*
- A tracking sheet should be started:
 - ❖ An example of a Tracking Sheet for Deprivation Cases from Rockdale County is found in the Appendix. *See Appendix D.*
- If there is a police report or report from a school social worker, it should be attached in the file. These reports should also indicate if there were any photos taken.

#2 SHELTER CARE ORDER²

This document represents the initial approval given by the judicial branch to the executive branch to remove a child from his or her primary caregivers. It is often done by a phone call but then a formal order must be created to document this crucial part of the case process. This order can also be called an ex parte order.

The court file should now contain:

- The shelter care order signed and dated by a judge.
 - ❖ The Shelter Care Order is distinct from the Probable Cause Order/72 Hour Order and should be included as a separate document in the court file.
 - ❖ The Shelter Care Order should include:
 - ◆ the date and time of the child's removal from his/her biological parents/legal guardian.

¹Not all DFCS offices turn over this form, however it is a viewable document for courts and can be requested.

²See the Council of Juvenile Court Judges model court orders for a sample of all court orders: http://www.georgiacourts.org/councils/cjcj/deprivation_forms.htm

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- ◆ the date and time of the scheduled Probable Cause/ 72 Hour hearing.

NOTE: Some courts refer to the Shelter Care Order as a "Detention Order." This is a carry-over from the delinquency side of juvenile court where the judge is considering confinement of the juvenile. However, in deprivation cases the child is not being detained or imprisoned and neither are the parents. Rather, the court is considering if it is necessary to remove the child from the parent's custody in order to shelter the child from abuse or neglect. Thus the term Shelter Care Order is the appropriate term and courts using the term Detention Order are encouraged to make the appropriate changes.

#3 PROBABLE CAUSE HEARING

The probable cause hearing must be held within 72 hours of a child's removal from the home. This hearing is similar in some ways to a probable cause/detention hearing in delinquency cases and as explained above the terminology of "detention hearing" has often been carried over to the deprivation side of juvenile court. Again, however, this hearing is not a detention hearing which implies a criminal or quasi-criminal action, thus in deprivation matters this hearing, held within 72 hours of removal from the parents, should be referred to as the probable cause hearing. This hearing is required to have the executive branch "show cause" to the judicial branch regarding why this family required government intervention. It is crucial that a court order documenting the results of this hearing be included in the case file.

The court file should now contain:

- The probable cause hearing order (72 hour order) which should include:
 - ❖ Findings regarding whether DFCS has made reasonable efforts to:
 - 1) preserve and reunify the family prior to the placement of the child in foster care,
 - 2) prevent or eliminate the need for the removal of the child from his/her home and,
 - 3) make it possible for the child to return safely home.
 - ❖ If Reasonable Efforts were made, then the order must contain fact-specific examples of the reasonable efforts that were used in that particular case.
 - ❖ If Reasonable Efforts were not made, the Probable Cause Order (72 Hour Order) must include an explanation of why reasonable efforts were not necessary. These reasons are strictly limited to a few situations that are listed in OCGA §15-11-58(a)(4)(A-C).
 - ❖ If the court decides the child is to remain in state custody, the Probable Cause Order (72 Hour Order) must also document:
 - ◆ that remaining in the home would be "contrary to the welfare of the child."

NOTE: These specific findings and terminology of "reasonable efforts" and "contrary to the welfare of the child" are required by federal law, as a condition for receipt of federal foster care money. Assuring that these specific findings have been documented in the case file, helps the State provide more resources for these families. These findings are also important in general to satisfy the due process rights of parents and children.

The definition of "reasonable efforts" currently varies from county to county. The bar needs to be set high for this standard, as removing children from biological parents is a severe government action. Clear delineation and documentation of the above require-

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ments provides the State's evidence of findings to support a child's classification and funding stream within the system. Proper documentation within a child's first order assures the possibility of federal IV-E funding which provides more money for the child's needs. If this court order does not properly make these findings, the child will have a different classification which can never be remedied as long as the child is in state custody and can even prevent the child from receiving adoption assistance.

Because of the importance of these findings:

- If the Probable Cause Order (72 Hour Order) is a check off sheet, great care must be taken to make sure all the appropriate boxes are checked. Carelessness in missing a check box can have a big effect on a child's case.
- Additionally, if a check off sheet is being used for the Order, it must include lines for the judge to enter the specific "factual basis."

#4 POST-PROBABLE CAUSE HEARING DOCUMENTATION

If probable cause has been found (i.e. the case wasn't closed at the Probable Cause hearing), then the court file should now contain:

- Notice
 - ❖ In most counties the individual caseworker is responsible for notifying all parties of the Probable Cause Hearing. This is called informal notice and is allowed for the probable cause hearing only. It is important to document all notice attempts (both formal and informal) to be able to show that the due process rights of the parents were covered by the court. If notice is given verbally at any hearing by the judge, court staff or one of the parties for the next hearing(s), find a way to record that information.
- It will benefit a child's case if it goes up on appeal.
- ❖ Formal notice is a record of the summons and a copy of the petition which is required for all hearings after the Probable Cause Hearing.
- ❖ Notice documentation, of both failed and successful attempts, needs to be in the court file as soon as it is available, including (and especially) notice to all father(s) - including putative fathers.
 - ◆ Ideally, this action should be documented on a tracking sheet which includes a certificate of service.
 - ◆ All changes in the contact information for parents should be documented on the tracking sheet for future service.
- Any pretrial motions filed with the court and the corresponding court orders addressing those motions.
- Appointment of Attorneys for Parents: Documentation of appointment and contact information for the appointee(s) is needed as soon as it is done. Many courts have a standard order for such appointments.
 - ❖ Ideally, as soon as a child is removed from the home, counsel should be appointed for the parents or parents should be advised to hire their own attorney. Sometimes, a family has to qualify for a court-appointed attorney, and this takes time. In at least one county, an attorney can be appointed, and a parent can pay the county back later if it is determined that they do not meet the requirements for a court-appointed attorney.
 - ❖ It was agreed that a more uniform way of appointment would be best.

- Appointment of Child Advocate Attorney and/or Lay Guardian Ad Litem/CASA (GAL) for the Child: Documentation of these appointment(s), and contact information for the appointee(s) is needed. Some courts appoint either a child advocate attorney or a GAL before or at the Probable Cause hearing. A few courts in the state appoint both a child advocate attorney and a GAL
 - ❖ There are differences in the two roles. The attorney works for the child, while the GAL works for the court. The Child Advocate Attorney can perform all of the standard attorney tasks such as calling witnesses, subpoenaing documents and making opening or closing statements. Likewise, the attorney is bound by confidentiality and all other rules of professional conduct. The GAL is usually not an attorney and thus serves a different function under different rules. The GAL acts as an agent of the court, following his/her own judgment and reporting to the court what he/she believes would be in the child's best interest. Thus, it is important to document which role was appointed or if both were appointed
 - ❖ The clerks agreed that appointment orders should be in the file, with the most recent on top. A sample of appointment orders is included in the appendices. *See Appendix E, F and G for samples.*

#5 SCHEDULING ORDER

The Court Improvement Initiative recommends using scheduling orders and a number of court already do so. If it applies in the jurisdiction, it is to be done at the probable cause hearing or adjudication, depending on the Judge's discretion. Any courts that use such orders should include them in their casefiles.

The court file should now contain:

- The scheduling order.
See Appendix H.

#6 THE CASE PLAN

The case plan is the roadmap for the child's case and the due process documentation for the parent(s) to get their child placed back in their home. It is a document created by DFCS with input from the parties and submitted to the court for approval. Cases have been overturned on appeal because of poorly documented case plans.

Once the case plan is approved by the court, the document should reside in both the court case file and the DFCS file. The case plan needs to be prepared and submitted to the Court within 30 days of the child's removal and it should be developed with the participation of the parents and children, when appropriate.

The case plan will be reviewed every three to six months, either by the Judge or by a Citizen Panel Review, likely resulting in new documentation of progress toward steps and goals. Each court approved revision of the case plan should be included in the case file.

Optimally, the parents should get a copy of the case plan at the court hearing (adjudication, disposition, or combined hearing) when the plan was approved, but it can be mailed as well by the case manager to the parents.

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#7 ADJUDICATORY HEARING

The Adjudicatory Hearing is the trial of the facts of the case. The adjudicatory hearing is sometimes called the Formal or 10-day hearing. Because of the crucial importance of this hearing, this is an appropriate time to confirm/recheck that the court case file includes:

- The initial petition.
- A court order (likely the Probable Cause Order/72 Hour Order) or an affidavit setting forth the reasonable efforts made to keep the child in the home.
- Documentation of summons to all parties involved in the case (all legally sufficient service)
- DFCS Form 453.
- The child's Social Security number and date of birth (These two items can possibly affect legitimation). This information should be included in form 453, but if it is not, it should be sought for the child's record.
- Documentation of the appointment of counsel for both child and parents.
- The scheduling order setting out all dates of court cases, and the case plan review hearings set for 30 days hence. Inclusion of the scheduling order verifies strong due process and reduces continuances.
- An adjudication order (within 30 days after the hearing), that spells out the findings of fact and conclusions of law, a reasonable efforts finding and a finding regarding the best interest of the child.
 - ❖ The aspirational guidelines would require the adjudication order be in the file within 7 to 14 days after the hearing.

#8 DISPOSITIONAL HEARING

The dispositional hearing may be held immediately following the adjudicatory hearing or on a later date.

At this time, the court file should contain:

- A list of all who were put on notice to appear, those who actually appeared, and those who were not present should be included in the file at this and every other court hearing.
 - ❖ Everyone who should be present at the adjudicatory hearing also should be present at the dispositional hearing; for example, the child, mother, all fathers, their attorneys, the DFCS casemanagers, SAAG and any GALs.
 - ❖ If the whereabouts of either parent is in question, the clerk should publish on that parent based on their last known residence.
- A completed case plan should be in the file within 30 days of removal. At the dispositional hearing (or soon afterward), that case plan should be either approved or disapproved by the Court. The court should incorporate the case plan into the court file by court order. Both this order and the caseplan should then be included in the file.
 - ❖ *NOTE: See section immediately below for additional information regarding the case plan.*
- Documentation of the diligent search for relatives required by OCGA § 15-11-55 (a)(2)(D).
- Documentation the parents were notified of their right to request a judicial hearing on the case plan within five days of their receipt of that case plan.
- A dispositional order (within 30 days after the hearing).
 - ❖ The dispositional order should indicate where the child has been placed;

- ◆ At the very least, such an order must indicate that the child is to be placed with DFCS for future placement.
- ◆ Ideally, the court file should include documentation about where the child is actually living (i.e. a specific address).
- ❖ Best practices call for the dispositional order to be in the file within 7 days of the hearing
- ❖ As best practice, recommendations from the CCFA (Comprehensive Child and Family Assessment) should be included in the court file or court record. The judge should know what the assessment recommended as treatment and placement for the child.

#9 CONTINUANCES

If a case is to be continued, the court file should contain:

- A documented motion for continuance (Rule 11.3 of the Uniform Rules for the Juvenile Courts of Georgia), stating the reason why the case is continued.
- An order for, or denial of, continuance, as granted by the court. *See Appendix I.*

#10 REVIEWS

Reviews of a child's case (either by the judge or by citizen panel review) must be done every six months and in many courts are done every three months. The start date of the reviews begins counting from the date of the child's removal from the home.

After reviews, the case file should contain:

- A review order including:
 - ❖ Findings involving the Best Interest of the Child or actions being Contrary to the Welfare

of the Child that are clearly present,

- ◆ Some counties put this language in “**bold**” type in their orders,
- ❖ Facts stating the date and time of the judicial review and who was summoned or requested (ie foster parent) to attend and whether they were in attendance.
- Panel recommendations (if appropriate).
- Documentation of notice to all parties in the case,
 - ❖ Including to foster parents in accordance with OCGA § 15-11-58(p). *See Appendix J.*
 - ❖ Attorneys should also be given notice but their presence can be waived for Panel Reviews.
- Documentation verifying that everyone concerned (non-parties) has been invited to the review and the reason the review was necessary.
- Documentation of who actually appeared (likely in the Review Order).
- A supplemental order giving parties the right for appeal within five days must also be included in the file. Each of these documents serves to record the continuation of all reasonable efforts.

A pivotal point in a review is the indication of any new goals that were established as a result of the review. If new goals are established in the judicial review, a new evidence-finding hearing will be called with an appearance before the judge which would result in a new motion, a new hearing and potentially a new order. It is still appropriate to confirm the overall goal, whether reunification, non-reunification or concurrent.

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#11 MOTIONS TO EXTEND (OCGA §15-11-58(n))

Any motion to extend hearing should be held prior to expiration of the original court order (usually 12 months from the date of the initial order). At the time of this hearing, the court file should contain:

- An Order of Extension,
- Documentation of all who were noticed to appear, those who actually appeared and those who were not present,
 - ❖ NOTE: If the whereabouts of either parent is in question, the clerk should publish on both parents in their last known residence area,
- A current case plan,
- Language documented in the file (likely in the Order of Extension) that the purposes of the original order either have or have not been accomplished.

#12 PETITIONS TO MODIFY

A petition to modify results in a hearing to modify, change or vacate a prior order where a change in circumstance now requires a modification to further the best interests of the child. At this hearing, the court case file should include:

- The petition,
- Documentation of legally sufficient service to all parties,
- Documentation of notice to foster parents in accordance with OCGA § 15-11-58(p), giving them the right to notice and an opportunity to be heard,
- If the petition asks for custody to go to anyone other than the parent from whom the child was removed, the court file should have a copy of a home evaluation of the proposed new care-giver.

#13 NON-REUNIFICATION (OCGA §15-11-58h)

Non-reunification hearings are hearings where the DFCS petitions the court to ask that the Division be relieved of providing “reasonable efforts” services to reunite the child with his/her family because such services would be detrimental to the child and to determine whether efforts at reunification should cease. Certain statutory grounds must be found by the court to allow this path. This hearing requires the same or very similar documentation as the adjudicatory and dispositional hearing. The casefile should now include:

- The petition for non-reunification,
- Documentation of summons to all parties involved in the case and/or legally sufficient service on the parties. Also, make sure that attorneys appointed for the child/ren and/or parents are on record for non-reunification, since the move for non-reunification is the signal that the child's case is likely moving toward another permanency plan and all rights need to be covered,
- Documentation of notice to foster parents in accordance with OCGA § 15-11-58(p), giving them the right to notice and an opportunity to be heard,
- A non-reunification order (within 30 days after the hearing), that spells out the findings of fact and conclusions of law, a reasonable efforts finding and a finding regarding the best interest of the child,
 - ❖ The aspirational guidelines would require the non-reunification order be in the file within 7 to 14 days after the hearing.
- An order granting custody until the child turns 18 (if applicable).
 - ❖ Includes three year review order that appoints a reviewing agent.

#14 PERMANENCY HEARING

An order to cover the findings of a permanency hearing is required in the case file within one year of the child's removal. A "motion to extend custody" and a subsequent order may also be in the file and these two issues are often addressed at the same time, right before a year's end of a child's stay in foster care. However, while permanency and a motion to extend custody may be addressed in a single hearing, they are separate court actions and should be documented as such, in compliance with SB 236, defined in GA Code section, 15-11-58. See *Appendix K for GA Code*.

- An extension of custody to the DFCS can be granted for up to one additional year, thus giving parents up to a total of two years to rectify the situation that brought the child into care. After these two years are up, no additional extensions may be granted. If the DFCS desires to keep a child in care, the child's case must be filed again and a new adjudication hearing must be held to prove the child is still deprived.
- SB 236 gives caregivers (primarily foster parents) the right to notice and opportunity to be heard, requires a diligent search for relatives within the first 90 days of a children's removal from the home and expands the class of persons or agencies to be considered for permanent custody. A guide for best practices to implement SB 236 is available on www.childplacementproject.org/

#15 TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS (TPR)

TPR by its very nature, must be documented precisely. This is the most serious action the court can take regarding a deprived child since it severs all ties between the child and their natural family.

The court file should contain:

- The TPR Petition
 - ❖ NOTE: TPR hearings must be calendared within 90 days of filing
- All service and summons, as well as any updated appointments.
 - ❖ Including appointment of legal counsel for child if not already done.
- An affidavit stating that all efforts have been made to locate the parents and for any parents not personally served, proof of a search by publication must be present and signed by a judge.
- The judge can and should take judicial notice of all proof of service and all previous court orders. That way this information is contained in the file and in the court record just to be extra careful.
- The order for TPR must be written and filed within 30 days of the hearing.
 - ❖ Concerned parties have the right to appeal within 30 days of the judge's TPR order.

#16 POST-TPR REVIEW

Post-TPR reviews of adoption status or other efforts to ensure permanency occur at least every six months. It is recommended that the post-TPR review date must be stamped and in the court file within 72 hours of the judge's signing the order to assist moving these children's cases to permanency. A summary of efforts made to achieve permanency for a child should be documented in the case file and the child's placement must continue to

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be in his/her best interest. These children are “legal orphans” until permanency is achieved.

#17 CASE CLOSURE

For case closure, there must be documented notice of all hearings and appeals. If a child is adopted, then an order reflecting closure is signed at the adoption hearing by the judge. In most other cases, a SAAG gives the clerk a case closure form. *Sample forms appears in Appendix L and M.*

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Miscellaneous/Problem Areas

A standard for recording or transcribing deprivation cases is needed, especially for termination of parental rights hearings. Delays in getting transcripts greatly affects the timing on appeals, which in turn delays permanency for children. In addition, clerks of court expressed concern over:

- individual differences in training of court reporters.
- the cost of the transcripts.
- who pays the court reporter
- whose responsibility it is to get a court reporter
- the delay in receiving transcripts from the court reporter. It is necessary that clerks receive transcripts in a timely manner in order for cases to be filed and then heard quickly.
- siblings entering the system at different times.

One recommendation is to have extra resources to make sure that all TPR cases that get appealed get transcribed within 30 days of the notice of appeal. This cost would be well worth it, if it results in shortening a child's stay in state custody and ensuring a final decision for his or her future.

Other Tools

Basic Deprivation Casefile Checklist
Compiled for one to quickly see what should be in a child's deprivation case. *See Appendix N.*

Case File Review Instruments
Created by the staff of the Child Placement Project and Court Improvement Initiative to do quality assurance reviews which can be done locally as well. The staff can assist with creating a random list of children per county. *See Appendix O.*

Bartow Court Orders
This county is the only one able to give out court orders at the end of most hearings (one of the Court Improvement Initiative's goals) some of which is due to the design of their court orders. *See Appendix P (on the CD only!).*

Court Clerk Wish List

➤ ListServ for Juvenile Court Clerks

- The lack of communication between clerks needs to be improved. We need a common web site and/or an email listserv.

Accomplishments:

The AOC has created a listserv for juvenile court clerks.

➤ ListServ for Juvenile and Superior Court Clerks serving as juvenile court clerks.

- To build better relationship between Superior Court clerks and Juvenile Court clerks

- To see if the child and/or family has actions in both courts

➤ A picture of every child in the court file. The same person should take the picture and submit it to court.

➤ Uniform application for all court-appointed attorneys.

➤ Standard case tracking sheet.

➤ Financial aid for initial file standardization.

➤ Publication of a Clerk's Manual, with funding for printing a new manual and updating it on a scheduled basis.

Accomplishments: We hope this manual can be a starting point for an annual updated manual. We encourage clerks to contact us and share any recommended changes or updates.

➤ Money from the legislature for educational speakers and seminars.

➤ Case-counting consensus.

➤ Designation of the number of cases each clerk can efficiently and accurately handle.

➤ Modernize the clerks' jobs by filing and communicating electronically.

➤ Clerks' retirement fund, funded by the State.

➤ Juvenile clerk for every juvenile court judge in a county.

➤ Anytime there is judicial notice of prior court orders, they must be marked as exhibits and submitted into evidence. If not done, this can lead to major problems on appeals.